

Memorial Day 2007  
Mayor Chuck Reed

On this National Memorial Day, I stand before you as a grateful American, a grateful Veteran and a grateful parent.

As an American, I am grateful to all the men and women who we honor today. From the Revolutionary War to today's amorphous war against unknown enemies in countries around the world, men and women of this country have answered the call and given their lives so that we can live in a free country.

As a veteran of the Vietnam War, I am grateful to the men and women who went off to that war, many of whom did not return. I am grateful to the Vietnamese people who fought for freedom with us in the long Cold War against Soviet Communism, and I thank those who are here with us today.

As a parent, I am grateful to the many millions of Americans who support our troops daily. My daughter and my son-in-law have been in combat in both Afghanistan and Iraq and I appreciate the support and prayers of so many people. Believe me, the troops on the ground appreciate your support and your prayers. Please keep them coming.

We are gathered here on Memorial Day to honor and cherish the memory of all those who have done their duty in service to our country, and we give thanks to them and their families. From the

**Revolutionary War  
to the War of 1812  
the Indian Wars  
the Mexican War  
the Civil War  
the Spanish-American War  
World War I  
World War II  
the Korean War  
the Vietnam War  
Lebanon**

**Grenada  
Libya  
Panama  
Persian Gulf  
Somalia  
Haiti  
Yugoslavia  
Kosovo  
Afghanistan  
to Iraq**

and in countless other places around the globe, more than an million Americans have died to keep us free.

One battle in one of those wars, the battle for Iwo Jima in WWII, cost the lives of 6,821 Marines. At the dedication of the Marine cemetery on Iwo Jima, Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn, who had served in the battle and who was the first Jewish Marine chaplain delivered the following eulogy:

**Here lie men who loved America because their ancestors generations ago helped in her founding,**

**and other men who loved her with equal passion because they themselves or their own fathers escaped from oppression to her blessed shores. . .**

**Here no man prefers another because of his faith or despises him because of his color.**

**Here there are no quotas of how many from each group are admitted or allowed.**

**Among these men, there is no discrimination. No prejudice. No hatred. Theirs is the highest and purest democracy . . .**

That tradition of service and sacrifice exhibited at Iwo Jima is being carried forward today by hundreds of thousands of men and women in our armed services who are serving the country in difficult and dangerous conditions so that we can hold this ceremony in peace and I want to thank those men and women for their service.

On behalf of a grateful country. I offer my deepest gratitude to all of the men and women who have given their lives in the performance of their duty. They are all heroes. We honor them today and we give thanks to their families who have sacrificed so much to help protect our liberty, freedom and democracy in all those wars.

In closing, I want to repeat something said by Brig. General Richard Secord who flew a few hundred combat missions during the Vietnam War: "To be born free is an accident; to live free is a privilege; to die free is a responsibility."

Ladies and gentlemen, it is our duty to die free.

God bless you. And God bless America.

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